Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 21 Number 7 July 2024

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, July 14, 2024, 6.30AM: Zaheerabad. Meeting Point(s): IKEA, Madhapur, 04:15AM; BHEL Bus Stop, 04:30AM; Taj Dhaba, Muthangi, 04:50AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 97388-40070)

Zaheerabad, close to Chincholi, is located near Telangana-Karnataka border. The forest hosts rich biodiversity. Apart from medicinal herbs and trees, species like Red Sanders and Sandalwood are found abundantly with adjoining social forest, has good dry deciduous and moist deciduous forest in the core with Acacia and Teak plantations on the fringes. The forest area is also home to various species of birds – look out for White-bellied Minivet, Small Minivet, Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Tree Pipit, Rain Quail, Jungle Bush Quail, Rock Bush Quail, Barred Buttonquail, Painted Francolin, Baya Weaver etc.

FIELD TRIP-2: Sunday, July 28, 2024, 6.15AM: Kistareddypet, Hyderabad. Meeting Point(s): IKEA, Madhapur, 05:05AM; BHELBus Stop, Lingampally, 05:25AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 97388-40070)

Kistareddypet Lake, located near Patancheru, has recently caught the attention of birders. The lake is home to more than 110 species of birds, including large flocks of Little Stint, Black-winged Stilt, Black-tailed Godwit, Garganey, Gadwall etc. One can also spot Ruff, Spot-billed Pelican, Common Snipe, Greater Flamingo, Common Redshank, Temminck's Stint and other shore birds. The surrounding areas also host species like Mongolian Short-toed Lark, Citrine Wagtail, Baya Weaver, Indian Golden Oriole etc. This is a great opportunity to observe and record the diversity of migratory waterbirds and shore birds in this important habitat as winter draws to a close in the state.

Both trips will be half-day trips, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

NOTICE – ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING

The Annual General Body Meeting of Deccan Birders will be held on Saturday, August 24, 2024. A detailed announcement with particulars of venue, time, agenda and other details will follow separately on email.

SHADOW OF A BIRD IN FLIGHT
Trip Report: Osman Sagar, April 14, 2024
Text: Arafat Ahsan; Photos: Mohd Adnan Uddin

Grey Heron with fish

I rose with the birds that Sunday in April while it was still dark out. Got dressed, made myself a cup of tea, grabbed my binoculars, and a hefty field guide, that somehow is always carried but seldom consulted in the field. Instead, I find myself relying on a handy pocket guide, a gift and a nudge from two old friends, both ardent birders. The pocket guide is all of six leaflets long and folds compactly like a map, thus making it quite portable and a lot easier to consult while one's out and about. Being fairly new to birding (this was only my third outing with a group, and my first with Deccan Birders), I find myself frequently immersed in the guides, trying to place what I was seeing, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy. Looking down when I should have been looking up. While ambiguity is alluring, dwelling on it is also exacting.

One of the meeting points for this trip was Taramati Baradari. Adnan, who had organized this particular outing, was already there waiting, as I rolled in at the agreed time of 5:20 AM. Another regular member of the group also arrived soon after. Having made our acquaintances, we headed out towards the second and final meeting point, which was much nearer the birding site. The sky was getting lighter as we met up with two other members. We quickly fortified ourselves with some tea and drove on towards the peripheries of the Osman Sagar Lake, which was now only a ten-minute drive away. The actual site was accessible via a kilometre-long dirt road that ended in a clearing, which was to serve as our parking spot. As we got out facing East, to our left stood a temple, in whose compound the rustling leaves of a *Peepal* tree paid obeisance to the rising sun.

Up ahead, beyond some wet and marshy fields, lay the waters of Osman Sagar. As we carefully picked our way through, walking on the bunds, we could see the waters in front of us dotted with at least two dozen Eurasian Coot. Amongst them we also spotted a few Spot-billed Ducks, Little Grebes and Black-winged stilts. As we took in the sight, a couple of River Terns, with that distinctive fork in their tail, flew over our heads, announcing our presence to one and all.

Spot-billed Duck

For the photographers amongst the group the light was brilliant – with the sun slowly coming up, the waters were aglow, and dawn seemed to unfold at an unhurried pace around us. The tripods came out and lenses whirred. The quiet broken only by the Terns still circling and cackling over our heads. Perhaps we were perilously close to a nest?

Painted Stork

To the North stood a few scattered trees that, for now, had escaped the agriculturalist's axe, and flitting about in its branches we saw an Indian Robin. Turning South and slowly walking towards the south-eastern bank of the lake, we spotted a Black Drongo perched atop a power line. A few Barn Swallows put up an acrobatic aerial display for us.

Further afield, in the slightly muddy grounds, we could see two Common Sandpipers, their heads bobbing as they pecked and foraged. It was then that, on slightly drier ground, we spotted what looked like a Yellow Wagtail, with an almost golden breast that glistened in the early light; or perhaps it was a Grey Wagtail, and it was only the light playing tricks on us; or maybe we saw both!

Yellow Wagtail

The Drongo was gone, in its place now a Green Bee-eater. The sun was climbing fast now, as we walked gingerly over the bunds, trying to get closer to the south-eastern waters that, in the form of a fist, had punched their way into the land. On the farther embankment, what appeared at first to be small rocks and boulders curiously strewn about, on closer inspection, turned out to be a family of Lesser Whistling-ducks. This part of the lake, not as easily accessible to human feet, exhibited a greater diversity in its congregation.

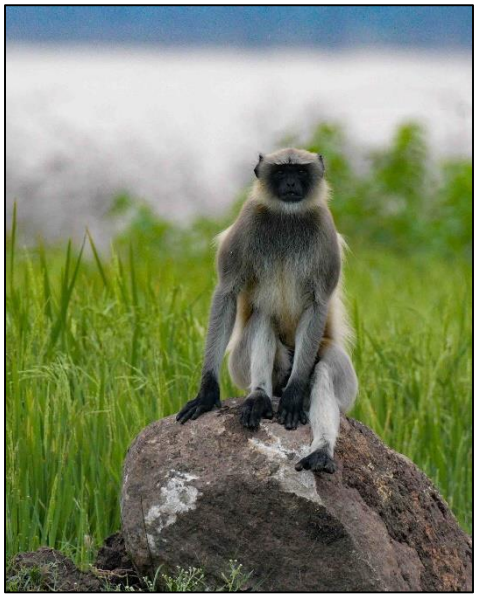
Little Egret

Grey-headed Swamphen

We could see a number of Little and Intermediate Egrets, Little Cormorants posing as they must, Grey-headed Swamphens, a Bronze-winged Jacana, Grey and Purple Herons, a solitary Black-headed Ibis, and later a Glossy Ibis. We stayed a while in that spot watching them watching us, a bit warily, and rightly so.

Grey Heron

Purple Heron



Indian Grey Langur

By now, the sun had really started to bear down upon us, and we decided to call it a day. It was proposed that we stop for some breakfast on our way back, but two of our fellow birders very graciously invited us to share with them the home-cooked food that they had brought along. And so there, in a nicely shaded spot, we enjoyed a sumptuous fare of homemade *parathas*, washed down with multiple cups of tea. We reminisced about trips taken, old and new, and the ones yet to come about, and lamented at the fast changing face of this city. Fed and nourished in more ways than one, we dispersed, silently pledging to ourselves to do this again. Soon.

The group at the outing

As I drove back, with the gravel crunching under the tyres, I marvelled at what I had seen that morning and what had eluded me. Was it a Yellow Wagtail after all with the breast of gold? And that silhouette in the sky that I could not make out, with the sun in my eyes. I had seen and not seen, seen partially and occluded. And I was reminded of what one of the Persian poets had once aptly said, translated for your convenience:

I gladden my heart in wishful thoughts of union
My prey is the shadow of a bird in flight

Indeed, all we see are shadows and half forms, more so when we go birding. What follows then is an incomplete list of 32 distinct species seen imperfectly:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	17	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
2	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	18	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*
3	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	19	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
4	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	20	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
5	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	21	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
6	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	22	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
7	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	23	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
8	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	24	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
9	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	25	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*
10	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	26	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
11	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	27	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
12	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	28	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
13	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	29	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
14	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	30	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
15	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	31	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
16	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	32	Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*

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OUR TREK FROM MIAO TO VIJAY NAGAR, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Trip Report: January 27 – February 3, 2021

Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao

A view of Dibang River (Photo courtesy: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

This is a trip report of a trek that was undertaken by me and my 25-year-old son Prashant in the year 2021 between Miao and Vijay Nagar, in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Myanmar. This trek is 125-158 km long, depending on the season & weather, and traversing through jungle, riverine and hilly terrains, and generally takes 5 to 8 days. This trek was primarily undertaken to unleash the spirit of adventure and to get a few days of living away from civilisation. It also gave us insights into how challenging, and yet simple, life can be away from the cities and villages.

The trek route (Source: Google Earth)

The Indian Government realised the strategic importance of this land mass of Arunachal Pradesh, jutting into Myanmar and secured the same by establishing a limited-use air field called an Advance Landing Ground (ALG) at Vijay Nagar, which happens to be one of the Eastern-most villages of our country. There existed a motorable road between Miao and Vijay Nagar in the seventies; however, due to the collapse of some of the bridges the road went in to a state of disuse. The problem was further accentuated by very heavy rain for most part the year aiding thick undergrowth and vegetation, leaving only a foot track for the commuters. Thus, in the absence of a motorable road this distance of 158km is covered mostly by foot. Majority of the road track is located in the Namdapha National Park which has an area of 1985 sq.km.

The 35-minute helicopter ride along the Dihing River from Miao to Vijay Nagar is very enchanting with rich broccoli-like wooded canopy visible till as far as the eyes can see. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh operates a scheduled service to this ALG twice a week. Since the seats are limited, a few lucky passengers get to fly from Miao to Vijay Nagar and back. My association with Vijay Nagar dates to 1995, from my years with the Indian Air Force. The IAF and its Mi-17 helicopters air-maintained Vijay Nagar ALG and the surrounding hamlets. Another prominent village in the vicinity is Gandhigram, established by the government by settling Gorkha soldiers and their families. Gandhigram is approximately 15 kilometres west of Vijay Nagar. This trek had been on my mind since several years, and I had been gathering inputs from residents and army personnel living there. My current assignment as a civil pilot with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh rekindled my desire to walk this route and helped me realise this plan. A scheduled night halt in Vijay Nagar in December 2020 helped me interact with various support elements and give the finishing touches to my trekking plan.

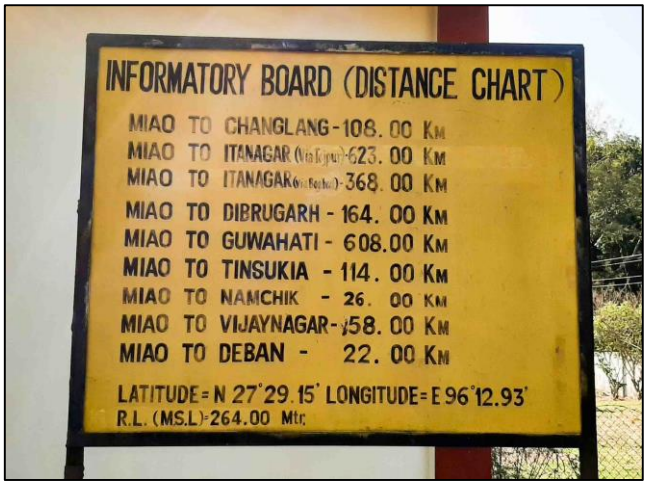
I discussed about the trek with my family and my elder son Prashant readily accepted the challenge. I did articulate the requirements to successfully complete the trek while stressing on the perils and dangers that awaited in any adventure of this nature. Injury, disease, wild animals, mosquitoes, leeches, lack of communications and weather were some of the major obstacles that were addressed adequately. All the obstacles were objectively discussed and remedial measures were rehearsed. To ensure suitable physical fitness for the trek, we calculated that one must walk 30 km a day in the plains with ease, to be able to do the jungle route of 20 km per day to enable us to complete this trail in a reasonable time. Thus, we trained to sustain ourselves for a continuous walk of 25 km a day during the actual trek. The trekking gear was carefully chosen and accustomed to before leaving Hyderabad. Thus we were ready by end-January 2021 to commence the trek.

D Minus 2 (Jan 27, 2021)
I flew from Hyderabad to Dibrugarh via Kolkata while Prashant who was on a trek in Himachal Pradesh with his friends reached Dibrugarh via Delhi. Post lunch we set course for Miao town (Western edge of Namdapha) in a cab gliding smoothly amongst the tea plantations of Assam. All was well till we entered Arunachal Pradesh, where we received a message that the following day's helicopter flight to Vijay Nagar was cancelled.

Entrance to Miao town (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Our original plan was to proceed to Vijay Nagar by helicopter and trek down along the river, a gradient of about 3000 feet in 5 days. However this last minute cancellation of the scheduled flight forced us to trek upslope from Miao to Vijay Nagar which of course was the Plan B. In the Defence Services we are trained to expect the unexpected and thus Plan B, which was prepared with as much care and detail and was unveiled at once and with ease. We reached Miao shortly after sunset and settled down in the Inspection Bungalow. Over an early dinner meeting with the local staff we decided to spend the next 24 hours in the preparation for the trek.

D Minus 1 (Jan 28, 2021)
The locals too were excited about our adventure and rendered all possible support. The day was spent identifying the porters and a guide. We identified 3 porters and one guide and carried out necessary briefing. The porters were experienced, lived in Miao and undertook regular trips to Vijay Nagar. The guide, Mr Aphu David was originally a resident of Gandhigram, and is settled in Miao. He has an ancestral house in Vijay Nagar as well, and a cardamom farm with a log hut halfway between Miao and Vijay Nagar that would serve us for the night halt on the second day of the trek.


INFORMATORY BOARD (DISTANCE CHART)
MIAO TO CHANGLANG - 108. 00 KM
MIAO TO ITANAGAR (Via Jairampur) - 623. 00 KM
MIAO TO ITANAGAR (Via Roing) - 368. 00 KM
MIAO TO DIBRUGARH - 164. 00 KM
MIAO TO GUWAHATI - 608.00 KM
MIAO TO TINSUKIA - 114. 00 KM
MIAO TO NAMCHIK - 26. 00 KM
MIAO TO VIJAYNAGAR - 58. 00 KM
MIAO TO DEBAN - 22. 00 KM
LATITUDE = N 27°29.15' LONGITUDE = E 96°12.93'
R.L. (MSL) = 264.00 Mtr.
Board showing distances from Miao to various places
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

We went to the village market and bought rations and camping requirements sufficient for 6 persons for 8-10 days. The camping requirements were mainly rations, cooking utensils, tarpaulin for tenting, candles and batteries. First aid kit, sleeping bags and water purification tablets were arranged from Hyderabad. Rest of the requirements were planned to be sourced from the jungle itself.

Black-hooded Oriole immature (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

D-Day (Jan 29, 2021)
We commenced our move at 07:30AM after gathering all the Team members. We hired a pickup truck that dropped us close to Deban village (15 km from Miao towards our destination) which was the farthest point where a vehicle could go. Once at the road head we repacked our luggage in to the bamboo baskets to be carried by the porters. Each porter had to carry a load of 35-40 kg of baggage. The porters generally take the river bed route to save on distance to be travelled in the jungle along the zigzagging hill slopes.

Breakfast time (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Bamboo bridge crossing (Photo: Prashant Yella)

A porter crossing a bamboo bridge with load
(Photo: Prashant Yella)

By 10:00AM we repacked and were all fresh and raring to go. This enthusiasm saw us covering a lot of distance along the river and crossing temporary bamboo bridges that were constructed by locals. These bridges further straightened our path and helped reduce the trek distance in all by 30-35 km! The local folks who built these bridges levied a fee which varied from Rs 10 to 50 per person depending on the length of the bridge and the tactical value the bridge offered in reducing the ground distance.

Another view of the bamboo bridge (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Resting point for the porters (Photo: Prashant Yella)

We reached the confluence of the Dapha and Dihing rivers by about 2:00PM. This river Dapha originates from Dapha Bhum which is the highest peak in the area, and the Dihing River is the one we were trekking along and which flows down towards Miao from Vijay Nagar. We spent time admiring the landscape and the wide valleys and felt the urge to set up a night camp. This was also the place where the hornbills show up in the mornings and evenings for crossing over to the other bank of the river.

However, our guide Mr Aphu David advised that we should cover some more ground so as to reduce the burden on the following day. Thus, we walked for another hour and found a small camp on the river bank set up for construction of a culvert over Burma Nallah. The incumbents welcomed us and offered their ration store for sleeping which was a small wooden log hut. Few *desi* chickens too gave us company for the night! We quickly lit up a fire to cook. Our dinner was ready in no time thanks to the experienced porters, and we were ready to sleep by 7:00PM.

Day-2 (Jan 30, 2021)

After a refreshing non-stop sleep, we were awake well before sunrise and made arrangements for breakfast and lunch. We heard a number of Hoolock Gibbons howling on either side of the river. Our porter friends were very resourceful and experts in living off the land. One of them had laid a mosquito net in the river the previous evening and was successful in catching half a dozen fish which were an add-on for breakfast. The kitchen was quickly wound up, all utensils were washed and packed in a jiffy.

We set off walking by around 07:30AM, earlier than expected. The river now passed through a narrow gorge and thus left no space for walking along. We were forced to climb up and walk on the road track, which was full of slush and thick mud. Some parts of the track remain wet for the entire year owing to rain and lack of sunlight. Almost all of us slipped/skidded and fell in the mud on the second day. In some cases, the shoes and socks got wet and required a change. The track was full of a thick slurry in which the feet would get stuck and it required sustained efforts to lift the foot out. Thus, our pace suffered but that did not deter us from achieving the day's target of 26 km to reach our guide's Large Cardamom farm. We did also see a couple of nice birds that enthused us.

Black-chinned Yuhina (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

Yellow-bellied Fantail (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

Black-backed Forktail (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

Towards the afternoon, a Black-backed Forktail led us along the track for over a kilometre and peeled off probably at the edge of its territory. A little after sunset we reached the camping point which was a log hut on the edge of a spur.

Large cardamom farm (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Below was the cardamom farm of our guide Mr Aphu David. He lives in Miao and visits the farm once in two or three months depending on the status of the crop. The hut had a fireplace in the centre and enough space around for all of us to sleep for the night.

The trek was a long and tiring one. Day 2 was surely the toughest of the 5 days and tested us both physically and mentally. Upon reaching the hut we quickly executed the duties we were assigned and prepared dinner and readied the sleeping area. One of the porters had managed a cabbage from a wayside settlement and same was boiled in salt and turmeric. We relished the same and it was voted one of the best dishes of the trip! Soon the lights went out and we called it a day.

Day-3 (Jan 31, 2021)

We woke up well ahead of sunrise as a matter of routine now. We performed our assigned duties and the food was ready in no time. The menu was simple. Rice, dal and some fresh chutney made from onion, green chilli and dry fish. Once the food was done, the ash-covered embers were used to boil up the stream water for drinking. Water thus boiled was cooled and filled in to empty water bottles. This was then treated with water purification tablets, one tablet per litre of water. This process was adopted for all the five days and it ensured that none of us had any stomach-related problems. Like nomads we once again packed everything in to our bamboo baskets and moved on towards Yachale Village which was around 24 km from the current roosting spot.

The track this day was not as bad as the previous, and we moved at the expected pace. We met a friend of our guide *en route* and stopped over at a suitable place to prepare tea. The tea was served in mugs made of freshly cut bamboo.

Tea stop (Photo: Prashant Yella)

The bright blue skies gave way to local Cumulonimbus clouds and we were pounded by moderate rain for an hour or so, but we continued to walk after deploying our rain gear. On the way we got to see a number of Great Cormorants, Crested Kingfishers and Brown Dippers.

Brown Dipper (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

Black-crested Bulbul (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

White-throated Bulbul (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

We also saw a few other birds – Black-crested and White-throated Bulbuls, Nepal Fulvetta and a Short-billed Minivet.

Nepal Fulvetta (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

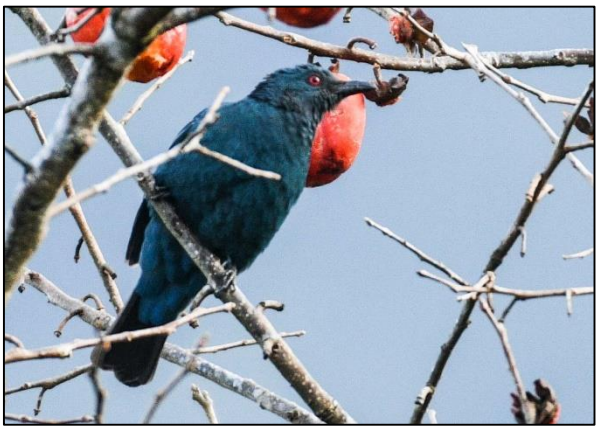
Short-billed Minivet (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

The village headman of Yachale Village warmly welcomed us to his abode as he was a friend of our guide Mr David. We were offered the kitchen hut to cook and sleep. We were offered firewood too and this gesture saved us a lot of time and effort. By now we knew exactly how to go about the kitchen activities and cook tasty meals. The host gave us company for dinner and narrated about their daily activities. Sleep was next on the agenda and it was instantaneous.

Day-4 (Feb 01, 2021)

Next morning we got a glimpse of the village life and we too participated in helping our host in collection of firewood from the jungle. After the usual breakfast ritual we bid farewell to the village headman and his family, and moved on towards Gandhigram which was our roosting spot for the fourth day.

Asian Fairy Bluebird male (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)



Asian Fairy Bluebird female (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

As we exited the village, we were greeted by a large flock of Asian Fairy Bluebirds and Himalayan Bulbuls perched on a tree that bore some tomato-sized sweet red fruits, locally known as Chinese Apples. There were also some other birds moving around in the vicinity.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

Himalayan Cutia (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

White-naped Yuhina (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

We maintained our pace and stopped for tea after a few hours of trek. Three days having passed, we decided to bathe as the river was very welcoming in the morning sunshine despite its near freezing waters. Once refreshed we resumed our walk to Gandhigram.

The Bell 412 helicopter deployed on the weekly shuttle service (Photo: Prashant Yella)

On the way we witnessed the weekly helicopter shuttle service descending through the valley for landing at Vijay Nagar. We also met a number of porters transporting goods on mules and bicycles as we made our way towards Gandhigram.

Entering Gandhigram (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Gandhi statue at Gandhigram (Photo: Prashant Yella)

As we reached the outskirts of the village we were greeted by fierce-looking local dogs. We reached our roosting site, which was our guide's home, well in time. Our guide Mr David wanted to treat us to a country chicken curry but could not manage one as it was already too dark. A surprise awaited us the following morning about which we had no idea. We wasted no time in preparing our dinner which was a vegetarian meal and called it a day.

Dinner time (Photo: Prashant Yella)

Day-5 (Feb 02, 2021)

After a good night's sleep at our host-cum-guide's residence, we woke up early as usual and started our preparations for the final day trek to Vijay Nagar. As we were making preparations for breakfast-cum-lunch, a lady appeared at our house with a consignment of rice, dal, large cardamom, some spinach and a country chicken. She was appreciative of the fact that someone from a far-off land visited their village by foot. Moreover, she probably got to hear that our guide and village resident Mr David was looking to buy a country chicken the previous evening. She insisted we accept them as gifts which we refused to do. We paid for the chicken after an extended discussion and persuasion. We savoured the chicken for breakfast and prepared to move towards Vijay Nagar, our final destination.

Some local handicraft products (Photo: Prashant Yella)

This day's trek was an easy one as the distance to be covered was only 15-odd km on a track that is well established due to the continuous movement of people between these two villages. Along the way, we also saw a few birds.

Common Green Magpie (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

White-browed Shrike-babbler (Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

We reached Vijay Nagar at about 3:00PM and settled down at the Government Guest House on the Eastern edge of the Air Strip.

Northern Lapwing
(Photo: Wg Cdr Y Prakash Rao)

We were welcomed by a flock of Northern Lapwings and a couple of Redstarts. We sent messages to all concerned about our arrival at our destination. Mr David treated us all to a sumptuous dinner at his home and we took a long walk back to the Guest House and went to bed after having resolved to wake up late in the morning. The lights went off at 10:00PM as the gen-sets that powered the village in the evening fell silent.

Day-6 (Feb 03, 2021)
We woke up, automatically, and well ahead of the sunrise, admiring the eastern glow beyond Myanmar. We decided to spend the day trekking in and around the river Dihing. However, there was another pleasant surprise awaiting us.

As we went to the local PCO to make a call to the Arunachal Aviation Department to confirm our helicopter tickets for the following Saturday, we learnt that there was a special chartered flight bringing in some state officials and that we were to take the return flight to Dibrugarh in the same.

Our happiness knew no bounds and we quickly made our way to the guest house and packed our belongings. While we waited for the helicopter, we distributed all the left-over rations including those that were packed and sent to Vijay Nagar as per the initial plan.

A view of Vijay Nagar valley (Photo: Prashant Yella)

The chopper came as per plan and we made a giant leap from Vijay Nagar to Dibrugarh via Miao in under 90 minutes. We were just in time to catch the Hyderabad flight via Delhi and reached home the same night. Thus, we surprised everyone involved with our trip by our arrival at Hyderabad at least 3 days ahead of the schedule!

The return flight (Photo courtesy: Prashant Yella)

Our trip to Vijay Nagar was truly historic, as there were very few who did such an adventure in the past. This trip had tested our limits of endurance and grit especially on the second and the third days. The weather gods too had played their role with some winter showers on the fourth day. The age-old saying 'well begun is half done' perfectly fits this trip. Planning and preparation paid rich dividends during the entire trip. Luck too favoured us despite temporary setbacks at each stage. Birdwatching during the trek was only incidental, as the primary objective each day was to reach the designated night halt location – but we did get to see some great birds!

We are truly grateful to a lot of agencies who supported us in ensuring the success of the trek. All in all, it was a once-in-a-lifetime and a very memorable trip.

A rope bridge across Dihing River near Vijaynagar
(Photo courtesy: Prashant Yella)

The full list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	9	White-capped Redstart	*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*
2	Rufous-faced Warbler	*Abroscopus albogularis*	10	Plumbeous Redstart	*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*
3	Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	*Ficedula strophiata*	11	Rusty-fronted Barwing	*Actinodura egertoni*
4	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	*Culicicapa ceylonensis*	12	Short-billed Minivet	*Pericrocotus brevirostris*
5	Yellow-bellied Fantail	*Chelidorhynx hypoxanthus*	13	White-browed Shrike Babbler	*Pteruthius flaviscapis*
6	Streaked Spiderhunter	*Arachnothera magna*	14	Sultan Tit	*Melanochlora sultanea*
7	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	15	Orange-bellied Leafbird	*Chloropsis hardwickii*
8	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	16	Nepal Fulvetta	*Alcippe nipalensis*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
17	Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	45	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
18	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus remifer*	46	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*
19	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	47	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
20	Black Bulbul	*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*	48	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*
21	White-throated Bulbul	*Alophoixus flaveolus*	49	Wreathed Hornbill	*Rhyticeros undulatus*
22	Black-crested Bulbul	*Pycnonotus melanicterus*	50	Scarlet Minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*
23	Grey Bushchat	*Saxicola ferreus*	51	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*
24	Brown Dipper	*Cinclus pallasii*	52	Burmese Shrike	*Lanius collurioides*
25	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	53	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*
26	Common Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	54	Grey Treepie	*Dendrocitta formosae*
27	Crested Kingfisher	*Megaceryle lugubris*	55	Green-backed Tit	*Parus monticolus*
28	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo althis*	56	Tickell's Leaf Warbler	*Phylloscopus affinis*
29	White-throated Kingfisher	*Rhyticeros undulatus*	57	Greenish Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochiloides*
30	Little Bunting	*Emberiza pusilla*	58	Yellow-bellied Warbler	*Abroscopus superciliaris*
31	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	59	Black-throated Tit	*Aegithalos concinnus*
32	Common Green Magpie	*Cissa chinensis*	60	White-browed Fulvetta	*Fulvetta vinipectus*
33	Himalayan Cutia	*Cutia nipalensis*	61	Indian White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*
34	Asian Fairy Bluebird	*Irena puella*	62	Blue-winged Minla	*Actinodura cyanouroptera*
35	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	*Hemipus picatus*	63	Silver-eared Mesia	*Leiothrix argentauris*
36	Slaty-backed Forktail	*Enicurus schistaceus*	64	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*
37	Little Forktail	*Enicurus scouleri*	65	Hodgson's Redstart	*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*
38	Spotted Forktail	Enicurus maculatus	66	Daurian Redstart	*Phoenicurus auroreus*
39	Black-backed Forktail	*Enicurus immaculatus*	67	Common Stonechat	*Saxicola torquatus*
40	Black-chinned Yuhina	*Yuhina nigrimenta*	68	Black-throated Sunbird	*Aethopyga saturata*
41	Striated Yuhina	*Yuhina castaniceps*	69	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
42	White-naped Yuhina	*Yuhina bakeri*	70	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*
43	Whiskered Yuhina	*Yuhina flavicollis*	71	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
44	Stripe-throated Yuhina	*Yuhina gularis*	72	Olive-backed Pipit	*Anthus hodgsoni*

Our team (Photo courtesy: Prashant Yella)

* * *

Trip Report: Kistareddypet, March 7, 2024

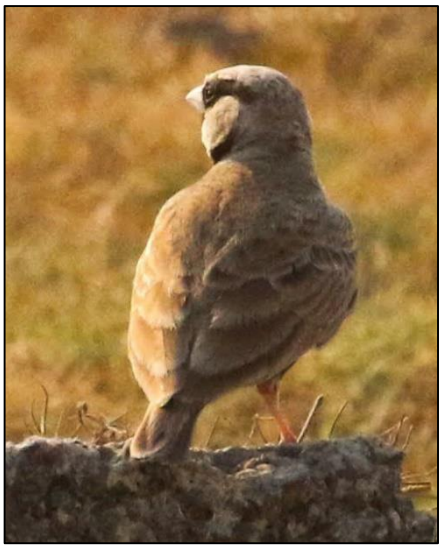
Text: Shilka Chaudhari; Photos: Dr G Samuel Sukumar

Northern Shoveler

Krishna Reddy Pet, also known as Kistareddypet, is a small village situated in Ameenpur Mandal of Sangareddy district in the state of Telangana. Its land area covers about 450 acres (1.8 sq.km). The lake can be reached by taking a right turn at Beeramguda arch on NH-65; the area can also be reached from the Outer Ring Road via Exit 3. The lake in this village has caught the attention of birdwatchers recently as it happens to be a hotspot for migratory bird species. This biodiverse birding spot was a top favourite of many participants for the HSBC Bird Race 2024.

8 of us visited the lake on March 7, 2024, a few days after the official Deccan Birders outing to the same place.

After a lovely breakfast, while we were *en route* to the lake, we spotted the Indian Roller, Black Kite and a few House Sparrows. Upon reaching the lake, we located a Grey Hornbill by its call; later it flew all the way to some nearby trees in the area.



Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark

Indian Grey Hornbill

Indian Peafowl

Garganey

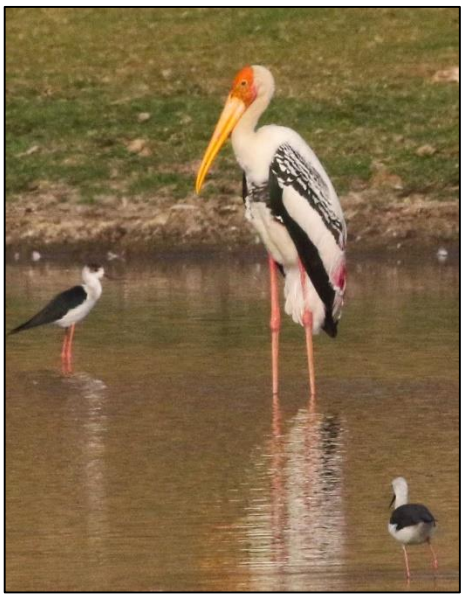
We saw a small flock of Indian Silverbills and some other birds – Indian Peafowl, Ashy-crowned Sparrowlarks, Garganey, Ruff and a solitary Purple Sunbird (female) busy collecting spider webs as nesting material.

Black-tailed Godwit

Eurasian Spoonbill

Ruff

The lake was almost dry with only a small portion having some shallow water. The lake is home to several migratory bird species like Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Spoonbills and Northern Shovelers. This remote spot is also a saviour for many waders and shorebirds.



Painted Stork

Little Ringed Plover

We saw some Painted Storks, Great Cormorants basking in the sun, and Little Ringed Plovers busily foraging along the lake's edge. We also noted a flock of Glossy Ibises flying by and Barn Swallows skimming low over the lake and scooping up water. We noticed Grey and White Wagtails walking slowly along the edges of the lake.

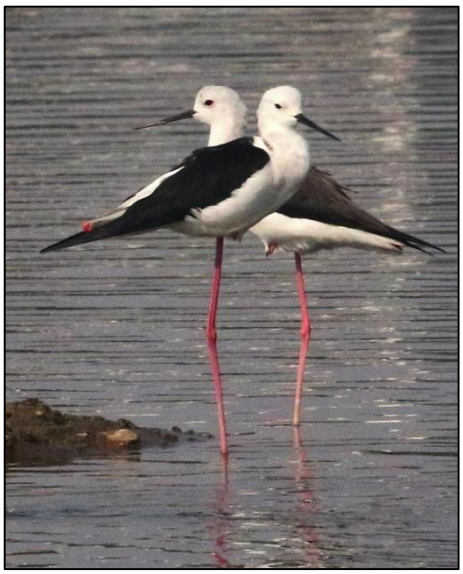
White Wagtail

River Tern

Wood and Marsh Sandpipers

River Terns flying over the lake were lovely to watch. Wood Sandpipers, Spot-billed Ducks, Marsh Sandpipers and Grey Heron were also seen.

Grey Heron



Black-winged Stilt

Little Stint

The lake is also home to Black-winged Stilts and Little Stints. We were welcomed by the Small Pratincoles on the dry mudflats and along the edges of the lake.

Small Pratincole

Temminck's Stint

Other common species which we spotted were White-throated Kingfisher, Grey Francolin (by calls), Blue Rock Pigeon, Blue Rock Thrush (female) and Cattle Egret. Though the size of this lake was small in comparison to the other lakes we had visited earlier, the presence of a diverse group of birds did not disappoint us.

Marsh Sandpiper

Shafaat uncle and Kulkarni uncle were having a discussion on whether a certain bird they spotted was a Godwit or not. I, on the other hand, mistook a Shoveler for Common Shelduck, which was corrected after referring to the book by Grimmett. Samuel uncle had got some very nice shots of the wetland birds spotted on that day.

We decided to call it a day due to rising heat, as it was almost afternoon. We made a note of 48 bird species on that day. Personally, I had seen Spoonbills, Pratincoles and Godwits for the first time on this trip.

The village is inside the Outer Ring Road and is zoned as a Multipurpose Residential Zone by the HMDA. This would be posing a real concern as residential developments in the area would deplete groundwater and other natural resources. As the number of lakes are on decline due to human population and odd weather patterns, the natural habitat needs to be preserved in order to protect the waders and migratory bird species. Eco-tourism posters and protecting the wetlands can bring a positive change in conservation. Planting trees around the lake, developing the spot for eco-tourism, and saving it from encroachments so as to protect the natural water bodies from pollution and decay is very important.

Indian Dark Grass Blue

The full list of birds seen on the trip :

Sl. No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix grisea*	13	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*
2	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	14	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*
3	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	15	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*
4	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	16	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
5	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	17	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
6	Black-shouldered Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	18	Great Egret	*Casmerodius albus*
7	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	19	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orietalis*
8	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columbia rupestris*	20	Grey Francolin	*Ortygornis pondicerianus*
9	Blue Rock Thrush (female)	*Monticola solitarius*	21	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
10	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	22	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
11	Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	23	Indian Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
12	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	24	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*

Sl. No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No	Species Name	Scientific Name
25	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicata*	37	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
26	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	38	Red vented-Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
27	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	39	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
28	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*	40	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*
29	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	41	Ruff	*Philomachus pugnax*
30	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	42	Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*
31	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	43	Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*
32	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	44	Spotted Dove	*Strptopelia chinensis*
33	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	45	Temminick's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*
34	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	46	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Argya affinis*
35	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	47	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
36	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*	48	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*

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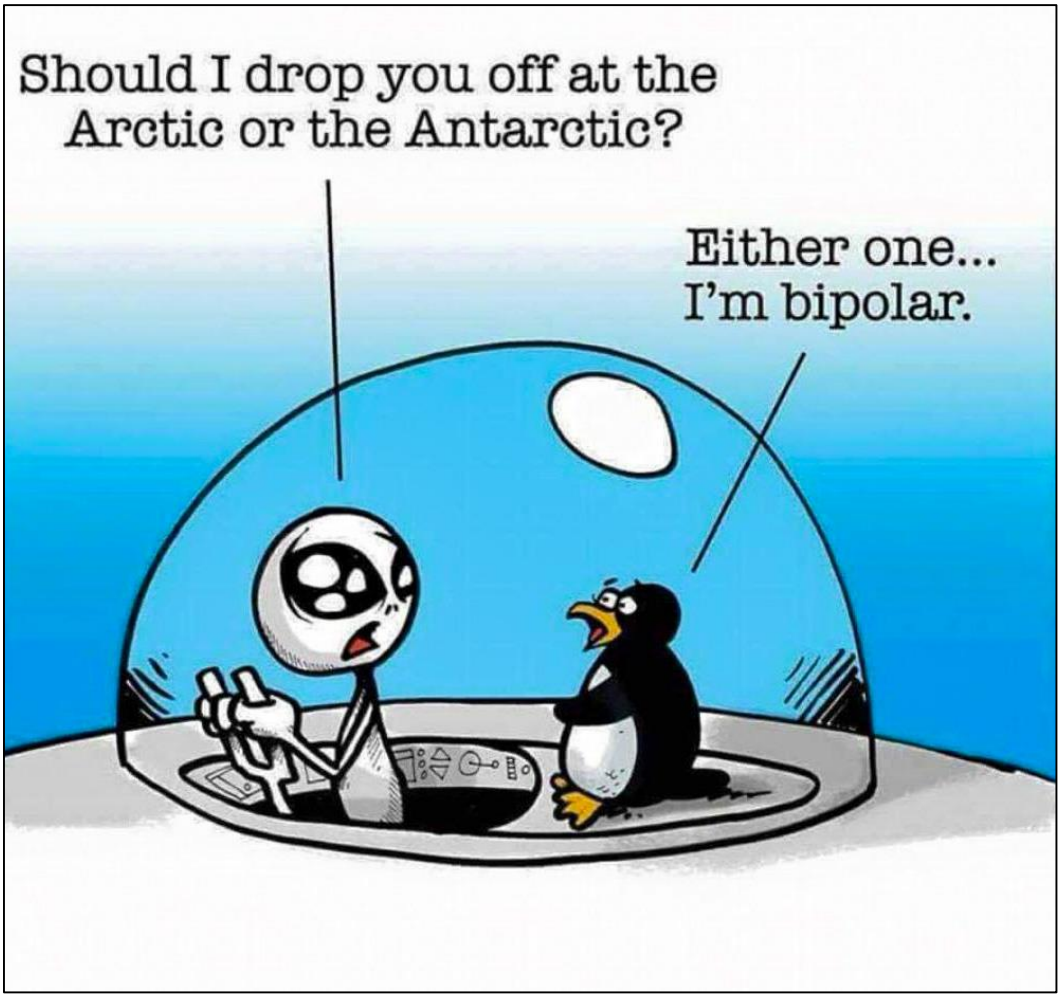
Bird Humour

Umesh Mani



(Received on WhatsApp, September 18, 2020)

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Deccan Birders - Financial Statements FY 2023-24

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2024					
			Note No.	***31-03-2024***	***31-03-2023***
				`	`
I	**LIABILITIES**				
	1.	**Society Funds**			
		Capital Funds	1	***20,79,851***	19,70,567
				20,79,851	19,70,567
	2.	**Current liabilities**			
		Other Current Liabilities	2	***11,800***	-
				11,800	-
		TOTAL		***20,91,651***	19,70,567
II	**ASSETS**				
	1.	**Non Current Assets**			
		Property, Plant and Equipment	3	***4,512***	5,308
	2.	**Current Assets**			
		Inventories	4	***80,977***	2,075
		Cash and Bank Balances	5	***19,89,768***	19,37,111
		Short Term Loans and Advances	6	***10,898***	21,416
		Other Current Assets	7	***5,495***	4,657
				20,87,139	19,65,259
		TOTAL		***20,91,651***	19,70,567

Per Our Report of Even Date

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

P GANAPATI RAO
Partner
M.No.024113

Hyderabad
July 08, 2024

For and on Behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

JVD Moorty	***Krishna Nagarajan***	***Srikanth B***
President	***Hon. Treasurer***	***Hon. Secretary***

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2024						
				Cash	**Canara Bank**	**Total**
1	**Opening Balance**			5,074	2,32,037	
2	**Receipts during the year**					
	Admission Fee					
	Life Membership Fees				39,000	
	Annual Membership Fees				8,900	
	Student Membership Fees				800	
	Interest received from Saving Bank				7,190	
	Interest received-F.D				97,322	
	Sale of Caps and T- Shirts			-	24,200	
	Donations					
	Income Tax Refund				14,062	
	Interest on Income Tax Refund				832	
				5,074	**4,24,343**	**-**
3	**Payments during the year**					
	Audit Fees					
	Bank Charges				2	
	Post Box Charges			150		
	Postage & Courier			800		
	Printing and Stationery			2,850		
	T-shirts and caps				99,330	
	Fixed Deposit - Canara Bank					
	Income Tax				5,168	
	Lecture accomodation				10,999	
	Miscellaneous			1,150		
	Outstanding Expenses					
	Stipend				-	
	Honorarium				19,200	
	Website Maintenance				-	
				4,950	**1,34,699**	**-**
4	**Closing Balance**			124	2,89,644.42	-

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on Behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

V SRINATH
Partner
M.No.021185

JVD Moorty
President

Krishna Nagarajan
Hon. Treasurer

Srikanth B
Hon. Secretary

July 08, 2024
Place: Hyderabad

Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*)

Painted Sandgrouse male (L) and female (R) (Greater Rann Of Kutch, Gujarat, April 15, 2024)

Order: Pterocliformes
Family: Pteroclidae
Genus: *Pterocles*
Species: *P. indicus*
Size: 28 cm

Description & distribution: The Painted Sandgrouse is a small, stocky ground-dwelling bird, slightly smaller than the more familiar Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. It is sexually dimorphic, with the males and females looking markedly different. The male has heavily barred upperparts with a clear buff shoulder patch, a strong black band cutting across a white forecrown, unbarred buff-orange neck, breast and inner wing coverts, fine black longitudinal lines on the nape, bare white patch surrounding the eye, and an orange bill. The underparts are closely barred with bold but finer lines, and it has a tri-coloured (i.e. chestnut, buff and black) gorget. The female is a duller greyish brown, has heavy chocolate, black and buff barring all over, and lacks the male's patterning on head and breast.

The Painted Sandgrouse is endemic to the Indian region, being found only in north and north-west Pakistan and India. It is a resident bird in most parts of central India and the Indian peninsula, but is not seen in the North East or the southernmost parts of India. It is monotypic, and no sub-species are recognized.

Habitat & behaviour: The Painted Sandgrouse is less gregarious than other Sandgrouse species, and is usually seen in pairs or small groups in dry country with thorny scrub or open rocky areas, open forest, rough grassland, low hills, firebraeaks in deciduous forest, and shallow rocky ravines. It is very well camouflaged when sitting, and can stay still until almost trampled upon, when it takes off with a clucking *yek-yek-yek-yek* and a noisy flapping of wings. Its flight is fast and well-coordinated. Large numbers may congregate near favourite water holes at dusk, when it arrives in small groups, continuing till almost dark. It is also said to drink in the morning, well before sunrise. When flying to and from the water hole, it utters a distinctive chirik-chirik call which, quite often, may be the only indication of the presence and movements of the Painted Sandgrouse in the dark. It feeds on grain, seeds and shoots.

Nesting: The Painted Sandgrouse breeds mainly between March and June, though nesting activity has often been observed at other times of the year. The nest is a scrape on rocky ground, under cover of a bush or grass clump. The usual clutch consists of 3 cream to salmon pink eggs, sparsely spotted and blotched with purplish red or reddish grey.

Local name: The Painted Sandgrouse is known as *'Pahari bhat-teetar'* or *'Bhat-ban'* in Hindi, *'Gutila teetar'* in Hindi in parts of Uttar Pradesh, and *'Palki'* or *'Kal gojal hakki'* in Kannada.

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